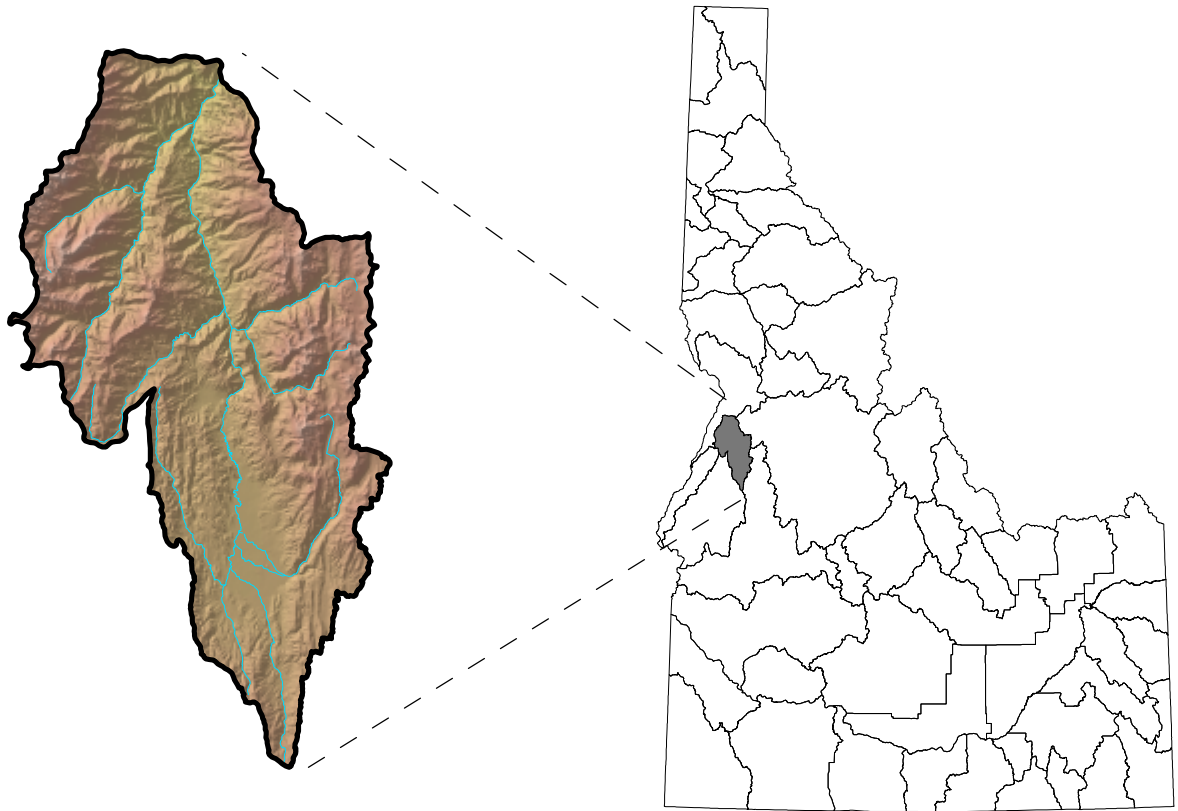


# **COMPREHENSIVE STATE WATER PLAN - PART B**

## **Little Salmon River Basin**



Idaho Water Resource Board  
October 2001

# **Comprehensive State Water Plan - Part B**

## **Little Salmon River Basin**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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This document describes comprehensive water resource planning issues, actions, and recommendations for the Little Salmon River basin in central-western Idaho (Figure 1). The 576-square mile basin is located in northeastern Adams and southwestern Idaho Counties, and flows into the Salmon River (at river mile 86.7) at the northern side of Riggins. With one minor exception, the Little Salmon River basin coincides with U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Unit 17060210 and Idaho Department of Water Resources Administrative Basin 78. The basin is mountainous and sparsely populated. Occupations in ranching, logging, and lumber manufacturing contribute much to the basin's economy. Tourism and related services are becoming more important locally, potentially helping to support the area during downturns typically experienced by natural resources-based economies. Individuals and planning or management entities are encouraged to utilize and build upon the efforts initiated by this plan.

## 1.1 Constitutional and Statutory Basis of the Comprehensive State Water Plan

The Idaho Water Resource Board (Board) is a constitutional agency responsible for developing a plan for the state's water resources (Article XV, Section 7 of the Idaho Constitution), and works within the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR). In 1988, the Idaho State legislature directed the Board to develop a "comprehensive state water plan" (*Idaho Code* § 42-1734A). Idaho Administrative Code for the IDWR further defines comprehensive state water planning rules (IDAPA 37.02.01).

The comprehensive state water plan is a two-part document. "Part A," entitled *Idaho State Water Plan* (Idaho Water Resource Board 1996), sets out statewide policies, goals, and objectives for water resources in the public interest. The latest version was

adopted in December 1996. The second part, "Part B," is directed at specific water resources (for example, river basins, waterways, groundwater aquifers, etc.) and in this case, is named the *Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan-Part B*. The "Part B" plan explains issues, goals, and recommendations that are specific to the Little Salmon River basin. For brevity, the *Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan-Part B* is simply referred to as the *Plan* throughout this document.

## 1.2 Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan History and Public Involvement

Flooding and related landslides in January 1997 spurred the formation of the *Plan*. In a letter to IDWR, the Little Salmon Watershed Alliance, Inc. requested that IDWR determine which areas were prone to landslides and slippages (Little Salmon Watershed Alliance, Inc. June 26, 1997, pp.1-2). However, the requested study was beyond the normal work capacity of IDWR and the Board, but general elements related to the request could be addressed by the Board's comprehensive planning process. The Board subsequently decided to develop a comprehensive state water plan for the entire Little Salmon River basin in order to provide an analysis of the basin's resources, and to develop recommendations that help guide resource decisions in the future, but with considerations for floods and landslides being a prominent part of the *Plan*.

- The *Draft Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan* was released for public comment on September 27, 2000. Comments were taken until November 30, 2000.
- A second draft (*Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan: Second Draft*) was released on June 4, 2001, and comments were taken until August 3, 2001.



**Figure 1.** Shaded relief map of the Little Salmon River basin.



- The second draft included a supplemental document containing a discussion of flooding and landslides (titled, Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan-Part B: Supplement - Flood and Landslide Management Information).
- The Board adopted the *Little Salmon River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan-Part B*, on October 19, 2001, and submitted it to the Idaho legislature during the first week of the 2002 Legislative Session for final hearings and approvals.

The concerns and ideas of Idaho residents are an important part of the Board's planning process. Input from local citizens, property owners, and other groups who are most familiar with the area is necessary to understand conditions and issues of concern in the basin. Information meetings, citizens advisory group meetings, and formal hearings provided opportunities for public review and suggestions for the *Plan*. The Board weighed all information and concerns, considering both local and statewide perspectives in the public interest.

The public involvement process was initiated on November 10, 1998. Public information meetings were conducted in Riggins, Pollock, and New Meadows. The purpose of the meetings was to inform residents and others about the preparation of the *Plan*, and to ask them to identify important issues and concerns in the basin.

In accordance with its Comprehensive State Water Plan Rules (*Rule 30, IDAPA 37.02.01*), the Board formed a citizens advisory group comprised of local residents in January 1999. Members represented local government, industry, agriculture, and private interests including water-users, landowners, and sportsmen. The mission of the group was identify local concerns, to review information, and to provide opinions and suggestions for the Board's consideration in plan development. The group met eight times during development of the plan's first draft, and three more times for the second draft plan. All group meetings

were open to the public. In addition, newsletters were circulated to interested parties that summarized the development of the *Plan*, announced group meetings, and requested comments on important issues and information. Persons who regularly participated in the citizens advisory group are listed in Appendix A.

### 1.3 Planning Process

In addition to the Board's public participation efforts, the process of developing a comprehensive state water plan consists of the six steps described below. Not all steps occur in the order presented; some take place throughout the planning process and some occur concurrently. All are considered essential to the process of developing effective policy and recommendations for the use of the state's waters.

- **Inventory Resources in the Basin**

Data, information, figures, and statistics about the resources in the basin are obtained through document reviews, field reconnaissance, contacts with government agencies, and citizen input. Maps are prepared using a computerized geographic information system.

- **Identify Local Issues, Concerns, and Goals**

Issues, concerns, and goals relating to water resources are identified through public meetings, formation of a local citizens group, and regular contacts with management agencies and local officials. They are described in the ISSUES, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS section (Chapter 3) of this plan.

- **Assess Current and Potential Future Water Uses and Constraints**

The Board's assessments of the present and potential water uses in the Little Salmon River basin is contained in the *Water Resources* and *Water Resource*

*Development* portions of the RESOURCE INVENTORY section of this document (Chapter 4). The assessments are based on review of water right records, state laws and regulations, the basin's hydrology, and discussions with agency personnel and water users.

- **Identify Waterways with Outstanding Resource Values**

Idaho Code directs the Board to evaluate the waterways of the state for “outstanding” fish and wildlife, recreational, aesthetic, or geological values. Outstanding resources are indicated by: 1) unique or rare features of regional or national importance, 2) significant public concern for protection and/or, 3) existing legal protection or special agency management designation to protect important resource values or the public safety. Specific criteria are described in the OUTSTANDING RESOURCE EVALUATIONS section (Chapter 5).

The Board has authority to protect outstanding waterways by designating them as protected in one of two categories: “Natural River” or “Recreational River.” Natural River designation preserves streams (or stream reaches, lakes, etc.) that are free of substantial human-made impoundments or other structures and have undeveloped riparian areas. Recreational River designation preserves rivers (or stream reaches, lakes, etc.) that have some human development within the streambanks or riparian area.

- **Generate Policy Alternatives**

Alternatives are the actions, recommendations, or policies that may help achieve the goals identified in the *Plan*. They represent all the different solutions that are considered by the Board. The alternatives developed for the Little Salmon River basin are discussed along with issues, found in Chapter 3.

- **Develop Specific Actions and Recommendations**

“Actions” are the steps that the Board can take under the authority granted by the Idaho Constitution and Idaho Code. These steps include proposing protection designations for streams or stream reaches, and submitting applications for minimum stream flows to the IDWR. “Recommendations” are the policy alternatives that the Board proposes to help guide public policy decisions. Many of the actions and recommendations evolved from ideas generated during citizens group meetings.

- **Produce the Plan Document**

Comprehensive State Water Plans are first released in a draft form. Draft plans are available for public comment for at least 60-days after their release to the public. After receiving comments, the Board may make changes to the draft plan, and then chooses whether to adopt the plan. If adopted, the plan is submitted to the Idaho legislature for more review and public hearings, possible amendment, and approval. When the Plan is approved by the state legislature, it becomes an official policy document of the state.

Once a plan is approved by the legislature, it can be amended only by actions of the Board and the legislature. The Board decides whether to amend a plan based on an evaluation of the impact of proposed changes on the protection and preservation of the state's waterways. The evaluation also includes the economic impact of the proposed change on the state as a whole, its effect on existing water rights, whether it is necessary to provide adequate and safe water for human consumption, and whether it is necessary to protect life. All amendments to comprehensive state water plans (Parts A or B) are submitted to the Idaho legislature for approval. Little Salmon River and the Rapid River.